

**Bronchitis**

(Chest Cold, Acute Bronchiolitis)

What is bronchitis?

Acute bronchitis, sometimes called chest cold, is one of the most common conditions seen in a doctor's office. It is the general term used to indicate inflammation (swelling) of the airways in the lungs called the bronchi. Bronchitis is usually caused by a virus.

Who is at risk for bronchitis?

People of all ages are able to get bronchitis. However, if you have had a recent illness or other lung infection or if you are a smoker, you may be more likely to become infected. Also, lung problems such as asthma, cystic fibrosis or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) will put you at a higher risk of bronchitis.

What are the symptoms of bronchitis?

Symptoms include a cough that is often worse at night. People may also have shortness of breath, wheezing, a "rattling" sensation in the chest, a slight fever, poor sleep, tickling in the back of the throat that can lead to soreness and an overall general ill feeling.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The appearance of symptoms will depend on the type of germ that is causing the bronchitis. If it is the virus that causes the common cold or flu, symptoms may appear within a few days, other virus infection may cause symptoms to take longer to appear. Symptoms may last for several weeks.

How is bronchitis spread?

How bronchitis is spread depends on the germ causing the illness. A good rule of thumb with any respiratory infection is to practice simple hygiene, such as covering your cough and washing your hands.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

This also depends on the germ causing the illness. Talk with your health-care provider about the type of bronchitis you have and how it is spread.

How is a person diagnosed?

A variety of tests determine if you have bronchitis and what is causing it.

What is the treatment?

If it is a virus that is causing the illness, you may only need supportive care; antibiotics will not work on viruses. If it is a bacteria that is causing your illness, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic. As always, talk with your healthcare provider.

Does past infection make a person immune?

This will depend on the germ causing the infection.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have bronchitis?

No, infants, toddlers and school-aged children should not be excluded unless the staff determines the child is unwilling or unable to participate in activities.

They should also be excluded if the staff determines that they cannot care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group.

All others can attend work and other functions as long as they are well enough to do so and are able to practice good hand washing and respiratory etiquette.

What can be done to prevent the spread of bronchitis?

Everyone should practice respiratory precautions such as covering coughs and sneezes, throwing tissues in the trash and increased hand washing.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

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